

Posted on: August 3, 2015

Village of Orland Park Receives Outstanding Achievement Award from US Conference of Mayors



The Village of Orland Park has added a new national honor to its list of accolades. Orland Park received the Outstanding Achievement Award from the US Conference of Mayors City Livability Program, being honored for Mayor Dan McLaughlin's Community Wide Anti-Bullying Initiative.

Jocelyn Bogen, director of the US Conference of Mayors City Livability Awards Program, traveled from Washington, D.C. to Orland Park to present the award at the August 3 Village Board Meeting.

"The judges unanimously selected Mayor McLaughlin and the Anti-Bullying Initiative because his leadership and support of these programs recognizes the importance of partnership between city government and its citizens to bring about positive change and improve quality of life," Bogen said.

The award recognizes mayoral leadership in developing and implementing programs that improve the quality of life in America's cities, focusing on the leadership, creativity, and innovation demonstrated by the mayors. This year's winning cities were selected by former mayors from a pool of more than 200 applicants.

"Our City Livability Awards Program gives us the chance to express our pride in cities' mayoral leadership in making urban areas cleaner, safer, and more livable," said Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director of the Conference of Mayors. "We are grateful to Waste Management for its many years of support for the City Livability Awards Program, and for the opportunity to showcase the innovation and commitment of mayors and city governments across the country."

Created in 1979, the City Livability Awards are given annually to 10 mayors and their cities. A first place award is presented with four outstanding achievement awards for cities with populations less than 100,000 and the same for populations more than 100,000. Winning cities are selected by an independent panel of judges with the winning mayors being recognized at the annual conference of mayors.

"Waste Management is proud to partner with the US Conference of Mayors and sponsor the City Livability Awards. We are especially thrilled that the Village of Orland Park --- a longtime partner of ours --- has been recognized for this award." said Mike Morley, municipal manager for Waste Management of Illinois.

A community wide effort that has been endorsed by a number of local government agencies, the Orland Park mayor's initiative delivers a strong message to the young people of the community that "bullying stops here."

"Orland Park's anti-bullying efforts being honored at the national level is a credit to the entire community," said Mayor Dan McLaughlin. "The village is working with The Bridge

Teen Center and we've brought in agencies from throughout the region to address bullying head on," he said.

The village began working with The Bridge Teen Center in 2014 when a coalition was formed with local agencies working with the village and The Bridge. In February, 2015, the village made The Bridge Teen Center the recipient charity for its annual Chefs' Auction, raising thousands of dollars for the center and its teen programs, a key part of which are its anti-bullying efforts.

"Bullying is a national issue that affects every community across the country," McLaughlin said. "Social media and the digital age exacerbate the problem making it even worse than it was when we were kids," he added.

The mayor chose to focus on bullying for two reasons --- deliver a message to those being bullied that Orland Park is aware of the problem and is willing to meet it head on, and secondly that victims of bullies are not alone.

McLaughlin learned of the national movement from the US Conference of Mayors and brought in local proponents to coordinate Orland Park's efforts. The mayor appointed Trustee Dan Calandriello, chair of the village's Public Safety Committee, to serve on the Anti-Bullying Coalition, bringing in staff to facilitate the village's anti-bullying programs.

"Orland Park's Anti-Bullying Program is a great cooperative effort both with the local agencies involved and with the number of people who are a part of this effort," the mayor said. "We are excited to work with The Bridge Teen Center and I thank our village staff for creating the award packet especially the Office of Public Information and the Village Manager's Office," McLaughlin said.

Orland Park's application packet included the required executive summary and answers to specific questions. Award application exhibits included the "Bullying Stops Here" public service announcement, "The Many Faces of Bullying" Photographic Exhibit, a description of the August 15 Family Day, local government resolutions and letters of support and a bullying piece from the village's newsletter.

"We are excited to be a part of Mayor McLaughlin's initiative and are very happy that Orland Park's local programs have been recognized on the national level," said Priscilla Steinmetz, executive director of The Bridge Teen Center in Orland Park. "It's a credit to the Orland Park community that so many agencies are a part of this program," Steinmetz said. "Everyone is working together to let our young people know that we are behind them," she said.

Bogen added, "This program encourages mayors to broaden their services for youth and build local collaborations with community stakeholders to empower young people. It is an effort that is to be commended and could be easily replicated in cities across the country."

"When we started this campaign with The Bridge Teen Center, we invited all of our local government counterparts to be a part of it making it community wide," McLaughlin said.

As one of the primary sponsors, the mayor created a list of public education projects with deliverable dates for the next several years. These include the community "Bullying Stops Here" walk held last October, the production of the village's anti-bullying video, the August 15 Family Day and other anti-bullying public education programs.

Morley added, "Waste Management has contributed to these awards for more than 26 years to recognize our nation's mayors and celebrate innovation in all of our cities. Orland Park's innovative and low-cost approach for dealing with bullying created an efficient, replicable model for other communities to consider."

The mayor added, "We want young people who are being bullied to know that they are not alone, to publicly discourage bullies from targeting other kids and to encourage bystanders to step in when someone's being bullied."

The village's anti-bullying video, produced in cooperation with The Bridge Teen Center can be found on the village's YouTube Channel at <https://goo.gl/GDiybs>. Details about the community's August 15 Family Day can be found at www.orlandpark.org/bullyingstopshere.